

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Please cancel claims 1-212 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add new claims 213-231 as follows.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-212: (Canceled)

213. (New) A fastener comprising an elastically deflectable portion having a stiffness characteristic which changes when a load on the fastener is larger than a first load amount, the first load amount being smaller than a limit of elastic deflection of the portion.

214. (New) A fastener according to claim 213, wherein the change in the stiffness characteristic is an increase in stiffness.

215. (New) A fastener according to claim 213, wherein the fastener comprises an elastic element which includes the elastically deflectable portion.

216. (New) A fastener according to claim 213, wherein the elastic element is resiliently deflectable upon application of a load to the fastener above a second load amount, wherein the stiffness characteristic of the element changes upon the load on the joint being larger than the second load amount.
217. (New) A fastener according to claim 213, wherein the elastically deflectable portion is resiliently deflectable by virtue of its shape.
218. (New) A fastener comprising a component having a load bearing surface for engaging an external surface of the an adjacent joint component, wherein the load bearing surface comprises a first contact section and a second contact section, wherein the fastener is resiliently deflectable such that the first contact section contacts the adjacent joint component through a first load amount range and the second load engaging section engages the adjacent joint component upon application of a load on the joint greater than the first load range.
219. (New) A fastener according to claim 218, wherein the component further comprises a curved flange, wherein the load bearing surface is at least partly on a concave surface of the curved flange.

220. (New) A fastener according to claim 218, wherein the load bearing surface further comprises a third contact section, wherein the fastener is resiliently deflectable such that the third contact section contacts the adjacent joint component upon application of a load on the joint in a second load amount range greater than the first load amount range.
221. (New) A fastener according to claim 220, wherein the load bearing surface further comprises a fourth contact section, wherein the fastener is resiliently deflectable such that the fourth contact section contacts the adjacent joint component upon application of a load on the joint in a third load amount range greater than the second load amount range.
222. (New) A fastener according to claim 221, where the fastener element is not substantially deflected above the third load amount range.
223. (New) A fastener according to claim 221, wherein the load bearing surface is shaped so that its outermost periphery is included in the first contact section.
224. (New) A fastener according to claim 223, wherein the load bearing surface is shaped so that the second contact section is closer to a longitudinal axis of the fastener than the first contact section.

225. (New) A fastener according to claim 224, wherein the load bearing surface is shaped so that the fourth load contact section is closer to the longitudinal axis than the second contact section.
226. (New) A fastener according to claim 225, wherein the load bearing surface is shaped so that the third contact section is closer to the longitudinal axis than the fourth load contact section.
227. (New) A fastener according to claim 220, wherein the third contact section is recessed into the fastener element relative to the second contact section when the fastener is in a relaxed state.
228. (New) A fastener according to claim 221, wherein the fourth load contact section is recessed into the fastener element relative to the third contact section when the fastener is in a relaxed state.
229. (New) A fastener according to claim 220, wherein the first contact surface is deflected so as to be level with start of second section after loading the fastener to at least the start of the second load range.

230. (New) A fastener according to claim 221, wherein the first contact surface is deflected so as to be level with start of third section after loading the fastener to at least the start of the third load range.

231. (New) A fastener assembly for use in a joint in a work-piece comprising:

a first fastener component for extending through a hole in the work-piece, the first component having a first contact portion for engaging the work-piece;

a second fastener component having a second contact portion for co-operating with the first fastener component to compressively load the work-piece thereby forming the joint; and

a resilient element between the first and second contact portions so that it is compressed under load, the element having a resilience under a larger load range than either of the first and second fastener components.